

Administration of Barack Obama, 2013

Remarks at an Installation Ceremony for James B. Comey, Jr., as Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation

October 28, 2013

The President. Thank you. Thank you, FBI. Thank you so much. Please, everybody, be seated, those of you who have seats. [*Laughter*]

Well, good afternoon, everybody. I am so proud to be here and to stand once again with so many dedicated men and women of the FBI. You are the best of the best. Day in and day out, you work tirelessly to confront the most dangerous threats our Nation faces. You serve with courage; you serve with integrity. You protect Americans at home and abroad. You lock up criminals. You secure the homeland against the threat of terrorism. Without a lot of fanfare, without seeking the spotlight, you do your jobs, all the while upholding our most cherished values and the rule of law.

Fidelity, Bravery, Integrity: That's your motto. And today we're here to welcome a remarkable new leader for this remarkable institution, one who lives those principles out every single day: Mr. Jim Comey.

Before I get to Jim, I want to thank all the predecessors who are here today. We are grateful for your service. I have to give a special shout-out to Bob Mueller, who served longer than he was supposed to, but he was such an extraordinary leader through some of the most difficult times that we've had in national security. And he—I consider him a friend, and I'm so grateful for him and Ann being here today. Thank you very much.

Now, Jim has dedicated his life to defending our laws, to making sure that all Americans can trust our justice system to protect their rights and their well-being. He's the grandson of a beat cop. He's the prosecutor who helped bring down the Gambinos. He's the relentless attorney who fought to stem the bloody tide of gun violence, rub out white-collar crime, deliver justice to terrorists. It's just about impossible to find a matter of justice he has not tackled, and it's hard to imagine somebody who is not more uniquely qualified to lead a bureau that covers all of it: traditional threats like violent and organized crime to the constantly changing threats like terrorism and cybersecurity. So he's got the résumé.

But of course, Jim is also a famously cool character; he's the calmest in the room during a crisis. Here's what a fellow former prosecutor said about him. He said, "You know that Rudyard Kipling line—'If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs'—that's Jim."

There's also a story from the time during his prosecution of the Gambino crime family. One of the defendants was an alleged hit man named Lorenzo. And during the trial, Jim won an award from the New York City Bar Association. When the court convened the next morning, everybody was buzzing about it, and suddenly, a note was passed down from the defendant's table across the aisle to the prosecutor's table. It was handed to Jim, and it read: "Dear Jim, congratulations on your award. No one deserves it more than you. You're a true professional. Sincerely, Lorenzo." [*Laughter*]

"Sincerely, Lorenzo." Now, we don't know how sincere he was. [*Laughter*] We don't know whether this was a veiled threat or a plea for leniency or an honest compliment. But I think it is

fair to say that Jim has won the respect of folks across the spectrum, including Lorenzo.
[Laughter]

He's the perfect leader for an organization whose walls are graced by the words of a legendary former Director: "The most effective weapon against crime is cooperation." Jim has worked with many of the more than 35,000 men and women of the FBI over the course of his long and distinguished career. And it's his admiration and respect for all of you, individually, his recognition of the hard work that you do every day, sometimes under extraordinarily difficult circumstances—not just the folks out in the field, but also folks working the back rooms, doing the hard work, out of sight—his recognition that your mission is important is what compelled him to answer the call to serve his country again.

The FBI joins forces with our intelligence, our military, and homeland security professionals to break up all manner of threats, from taking down drug rings to stopping those who prey on children, to breaking up Al Qaida cells, to disrupting their activities, thwarting their plots. And your mission keeps expanding because the nature of the threats are always changing.

Unfortunately, the resources allotted to that mission has been reduced by sequestration. I'll keep fighting for those resources because our country asks and expects a lot from you, and we should make sure you've got the resources you need to do the job. Especially when many of your colleagues put their lives on the line on a daily basis, all to serve and protect our fellow citizens, the least we can do is make sure you've got the resources for it and that your operations are not disrupted because of politics in this town.

Now, the good news is, things like courage, leadership, judgment, and compassion, those resources are—potentially, at least—inexhaustible. That's why it's critical that we seek out the best people to serve: folks who have earned the public trust, who have excellent judgment, even in the most difficult circumstances; those who possess not just a keen knowledge of the law, but also a moral compass that they—and we—can always count on.

And that's who we've got in Jim Comey. I'll tell you, I interviewed a number of extraordinary candidates for this job, all with sterling credentials. But what gave me confidence that this was the right man for the job wasn't his degrees and it wasn't his résumé, it was in talking to him and seeing his amazing family, a sense that this is somebody who knows what's right and what's wrong and is willing to act on that basis every single day. And that's why I'm so grateful that he's signed up to serve again.

I will spare you yet another joke about how today no one stands taller. [Laughter] I simply want to thank Jim for accepting this role. I want to thank Patrice and the five remarkable children that they've got, because jobs like this are a team effort, as you well know.

And I want to thank most all the men and women of the FBI. I'm proud of your work. I'm grateful for your service. I'm absolutely confident that this agency will continue to flourish with Jim at the helm. And if it—if he gets lost in the building, I want you guys to help him out. [Laughter] Because I guarantee you that he's going to have your back, make sure you've got his back as well.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

[At this point, FBI Deputy Director Sean M. Joyce introduced Director Comey, who made brief remarks.]

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:34 p.m. at FBI Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to Ann Mueller, wife of former FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III; Lorenzo Mannino, member, Gambino crime family; and Patrice Comey, wife, and Maurene, Katherine, Brien, Claire, and Abby, children, of Director Comey. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Deputy Director Joyce and Director Comey.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Justice, Department of :: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Director James B. Comey, Jr., installation ceremony.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Comey, Abby; Comey, Brien; Comey, Claire; Comey, James B., Jr.; Comey, Katherine; Comey, Maurene; Comey, Patrice; Mannino, Lorenzo; Mueller, Ann; Mueller, Robert S., III.

Subjects: Budget, Federal : Government programs, spending reductions; Justice, Department of : Bureau of Investigation, Federal.

DCPD Number: DCPD201300727.